



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD OPENED FOR JOHNSON'S SEAGRASS DRAFT RECOVERY PLAN

The National Marine Fisheries Service has announced a 60-day public comment period for the Draft Johnson's seagrass (*Halophila johnsonii*) Recovery Plan. The agency published a notice of availability for the draft plan under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) today, June 26, in the Federal Register. A copy of the Draft Recovery Plan can be obtained by calling NMFS, Southeast Regional Office at (727) 570-5312, or by downloading it from the following address:

http://www.nmfs.gov/prot_res/other/jsrecover.pdf.

Johnson's seagrass is found only on the east coast of Florida from Sebastian Inlet to central Biscayne Bay. This rare species was listed as threatened on September 14, 1998 (63 FR 49035)—the first marine plant species to be listed under the ESA. Critical habitat for Johnson's seagrass was designated on April 5, 2000 (65 FR 17786).

Section 4(f) of the ESA, requires development and implementation of recovery plans for all species listed as endangered or threatened. Each plan must include (1) a description of site-specific management actions necessary for recovery; (2) objective,

measurable criteria which, when met, would result in removing the species from the list of endangered and threatened species; and (3) estimates of the time and cost to carry out the recommended recovery measures. NMFS must provide public notice and an opportunity for public comment prior to approval of a new or revised recovery plan. NMFS will consider all information presented during the public comment period prior to approval of the plan.

Public comments on this proposed rule must be received by August 25, 2000. Written comments should be addressed to Mr. Charles Oravetz, Assistant Regional Administrator, Protected Resources Division, NMFS, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St. Petersburg, Florida 33702-2432. Comments may be sent via facsimile (fax) to 727-570-5517. Comments submitted via e-mail or the Internet will not be accepted.

For more information, contact Layne Bolen, NMFS, Panama City Field Office, Protected Resources Division, (850) 234-6541 ext. 237.

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